2: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

number of puppets is always made. Certain *kukusiut*, known as *ănuyax*, have in connection with their dance prerogative, the ability to summon and display supernatural objects in the form of small puppets. These are sometimes patrons, more often not, and include not only beings having human form, but snakes, hummingbirds, and other creatures. By calling his being, an *ănuyax* receives strength which can be transmitted to someone else—so the uninitiated believe—by passing it into the recipient's body. Non-members are told that X suffers death from which he is resurrected by his own powers, reinforced by those passed into him by other members of the society through the transference of their puppets. The most potent "patron-puppet" is the giant toad. It is difficult for a white man to understand how intelligent people, as are many of the uninitiated, can be deluded into believing that the somewhat rudely carved wooden figures which they see moving before them are supernatural beings. Emphasis must again be laid on the awe, mystery, and power of the ceremonies in the eyes of those who do not understand them, and the very great skill shown by the carpenters in making use of hidden strings, trap-doors, and other devices to increase the dramatic effect. Puppets are guarded very carefully by their owners and are usually hidden in some cleft of the mountains. A well-constructed one is used when necessary for many years.

Other preparations must be made for the stomach-cutting. As in all other *kusiut* dances, deception is practised and X is not really disembowelled. Instead, a wooden, or copper, frame is made to shield his stomach; over this is arranged the skin of a deer or a dog, cut to cover him from chest to thighs, with even the navel imitated. This camouflage is held in place by his breech-cloth and by a strap passing around his chest. He wears a blanket which conceals most of the fastenings so that the artifice is not noticeable in the dim light of the house. The chief difficulty is to find a dog with skin the same colour as X's. Many animals are killed, and the fur removed by immersion in boiling water, but sometimes half the dogs of a village must

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NE6 Bellacoola NE6

[The Stomach-Cutting Dance]

be slaughtered before one is found with skin to match."[97] The marshals carefully supervise all these arrangements, but of course on this night the work alone is allotted. The entrails of several dogs are kept and worn by X between his false stomach and the wooden frame.

After the allotment of tasks in connection with the mechanical work required, the marshals ask four women to come forward. Those selected are usually old people with good voices who, from long experience at the dances, have mastered the two[98] songs used at each *kusiotem* dance. The theme of these never varies and is believed to have been handed down from the distant past. No prerogative is attached; the marshals and singers merely choose four women whom they think will be good performers. The songs resemble those sung at mourning ceremonies; in fact, they are used with that significance when X has been "killed" by disemboweling. The singers, the women chosen, the marshals, and any other *kukusiut* who feel competent to do so, discuss in an animated manner the exact wording and tunes of the songs. Then the musicians beat out the time and the women sing one after another, while the audience drones. In view of the solemnity of the occasion, it often happens that senior singers from adjacent villages are invited to be present to render assistance. The necessity for practising X's songs, apportioning the carpentry, and rehearsing the mourning songs has taken up more time than is usual on a *nusiutälsap* night, and it is late before all is completed. Then, after the usual meal and admonishments, the people disperse.

Early the following morning the carpenters and those to whom work has been allotted gather early in X's house. A band, about two feet long, composed of alternate strands of dyed and undyed cedar-bark is prepared and placed on the

[97] Informants offered no explanation as to why this wholesale slaughter of dogs failed to arouse curiosity and suspicion in the uninitiated.

[98] Or four; there was difference of opinion among Bella Coola informants on this point.